WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A portable information storage medium loadable into an information processing device connected to a network, the information processing device adapted to execute software downloaded from the network, said portable information storage medium including a storage area for storing software information including:

identification information on the software;

location information representing a location on the network at which the software is stored; and

secret information on a user who uses the software.

2. A portable information storage medium according to Claim 1, wherein, in the storage area, one or more of a product code, a version number, information on the location on the network of the software, and a license key, which includes a serial number and which indicates that the user is an authorized purchaser, are stored as the software information.

3. An information processing device comprising:

a communication unit adapted to communicate with a server terminal on a network;

a portable-information-storage-medium connection unit

to which a portable information storage medium storing information on software to be acquired via the network is connected;

an information transfer unit adapted to download the software from the server terminal into an internal storage medium by using said communication unit;

a software storage unit adapted to store, in a software storage area of the internal storage medium, the software downloaded into the internal storage medium;

a software management unit adapted to manage the software stored in the software storage area; and

an external-storage-medium reading unit adapted to read predetermined information written in the portable information storage medium when the portable information storage medium is connected to said portable-information-storage-medium connecting unit.

4. An information processing device according to Claim 3, wherein, from the predetermined information read from the portable information storage medium, software identification information and location information on a location on the network of the software are extracted and managed by said software management unit.

5. An information processing device according to Claim

4, wherein, based on an instruction from said software
management unit, said information transfer unit uses said
communication unit to access the server terminal by using
the location information, and downloads, into the software
storage area, software represented by the software
identification information.

6. An information processing device according to Claim
3, wherein said software management unit performs a software
activating process for executing the software stored in the
software storage area.

7. An information processing device according to Claim
3, wherein, when the portable information storage medium is
disconnected from said portable-information-storage-medium
connecting unit, said software management unit performs a
deletion process for deleting the software stored in the
software storage area.

8. An information processing device according to Claim
3, wherein, when the portable information storage medium is
disconnected from said portable-information-storage-medium
connecting unit while the software stored in the software
storage area is being executed, said software management
unit performs a medium-unloading warning process, for

warning a user by interrupting execution of the software stored in the software storage area, and a user-input accepting process, for activating a user-input accepting state after the medium-unloading warning process is performed.

9. An information processing device according to Claim 8, wherein, when the portable information storage medium is connected again after the medium-unloading warning process is performed, said software management unit performs an execution restarting process for restarting execution of the software.

10. An information processing device according to Claim 8, wherein, when the user selects termination of execution of the software in the user-input accepting state, said software management unit terminates execution of the software, and subsequently performs a software deletion process.

11. An information processing device according to Claim 3, wherein, when the portable information storage medium is disconnected from said portable-information-storage-medium connecting unit while the software is being executed, said software management unit continues execution

of the software, and, when execution of the software is subsequently terminated by a user, said software management unit performs a process for deleting the software from the internal storage medium.

12. An information processing device according to Claim 3, wherein:

the internal storage medium includes a nonvolatile memory, a volatile memory, and internal storage;

said software management unit stores a device identification in the nonvolatile memory and stores user information, which is written by a user, in the internal storage; and

after the portable information storage medium is loaded into said information processing device, said software management unit examines whether or not the device identification and the user information are written in the portable information storage medium, and, when the device identification and the user information are not written, said software management unit writes the device identification and the user information into the portable information storage medium.

13. An information processing device according to Claim 12, wherein, after the portable information storage

medium is loaded into said information processing device, said software management unit examines whether or not the device identification and the user information are written in the portable information storage medium, and, when the device identification and the user information are written, and said software management unit finds, by comparing a device identification stored internally in said information processing device and the device identification written in the portable information storage medium, identity between both device identifications, said software management unit initiates accessing of the server terminal.

14. An information processing device according to Claim 4, wherein, when software represented by the software identification information is not downloaded into the software storage area, said software management unit executes a process for downloading the software into the software storage area.

15. An information processing device according to Claim 14, wherein, after the software is downloaded into the software storage area, said software management unit performs a process for executing the downloaded software.

16. An information processing device according to

Claim 4, wherein:

when software represented by the software identification information is downloaded into the software storage area, said software management unit performs a process for comparing a version of software stored in said server terminal and a version of software stored in the software storage area;

said software management unit performs a process for initiating execution of the software in the software storage area when both versions match each other; and

when the version of the software stored in the server terminal is newer than the version in the software storage area, said software management unit performs a process that, after downloading the software from the server terminal into the software storage area, initiates execution of the downloaded software.

17. An information processing device according to Claim 3, wherein:

when the software is terminated while the portable information storage medium is being loaded into said portable-information-storage-medium connecting unit, said software management unit displays, on a menu screen, an option for reactivating the software so that the software can be reactivated by input from a user; and

when the portable information storage medium is
unloaded after the software is terminated, said software
management unit performs a process for deleting the option
for reactivating the software from the menu screen so that
reactivation of the software cannot be performed in response
to input from a user.

18. An information processing device according to
Claim 8, wherein, when the portable information storage
medium is disconnected while the software is being executed,
said software management unit performs a process for
interrupting execution of the software, and, when the
portable information storage medium is subsequently
connected again after performing the warning process and
activating the user-input accepting state, said software
management unit executes a process for restarting execution
of the software.

19. An information processing device according to
Claim 8, wherein, when a user selects termination of
execution of the software in the user-input accepting state,
said software management unit performs a process for
terminating execution of the software, a process for
deleting an option for reactivating the software from a menu
screen, and a process for preventing reactivation of the

software in response to input from a user.

20. An information processing device according to Claim 3, wherein, when the portable information storage medium is unloaded while the software is being executed, said software management unit continues execution of the software, and, when a user terminates execution of the software, said software management unit performs a process for deleting an option for reactivating the software from a menu screen, so that reactivation of the software cannot be performed in response to input from a user.

21. A software distribution system for distributing software to a user, said system comprising a software provider and a store, wherein:

said software provider includes a server terminal, which is externally accessed via a network so that software is downloaded, a user-information-management database connected to the server terminal, and a file server terminal storing at least one type of software;

said software provider supplies said store with a portable information storage medium that includes a right of use of the software and information on a location on the network of the software;

said store sells the portable information storage

medium to the user; and

the user downloads and executes the software from said software provider after loading the purchased portable information storage medium into an information processing device.

22. An information processing method comprising:

a communication step of communicating with a server terminal on a network;

a portable-information-storage-medium connection step of connecting to a portable information storage medium storing information on software to be acquired via the network;

an information transfer step of downloading the software from the server terminal into an internal storage medium;

a software storage step of storing, in a software storage area of the internal storage medium, the software downloaded into said internal storage medium;

a software management step of managing the software stored in the software storage area; and

an external-storage-medium reading step for reading predetermined information written in the portable information storage medium when the portable information storage medium is connected in said portable-information-

storage-medium connection step.

23.   A computer-readable storage medium storing a program for controlling a computer to execute an information processing method as set forth in Claim 22.